

Action Plan for the Evaluation Process

Approximate time: 3-6 weeks depending on the complexity of your social advertising needs



Step #1 – Identify social advertising technology platforms

It's important to be fairly comprehensive in this first group so ask colleagues and check the partner pages of the social networks where you will be advertising. Check out third party resources such as trade publications and independent research firms that publish buyer's guides on social advertising platforms. Don't worry about trying to edit your list at this point – that's the next step. Just make sure you don't leave any companies out that might be a good fit for you.



Step #2 – Narrow the list to a small handful

If there are any platforms that you know should be on the short list, then start there. For the others, check out their websites. Do they seem to do what you are looking for? You may even need to call them up and ask some precursory questions to make sure you understand their offering. Some social media platforms focus on engaging with fans and followers via organic posts and aren't equipped for true social advertising. Also, look to see who they say are their clients. That should help you narrow the list down.



Step #3 – Start a relationship with your short list

Chances are one or more of the platforms on your list have already reached out to you so check your deleted mail folder. If need be, fill out a request for information form or just call the main office line. Let the vendors know you're about to start a review and that you want to invite them to participate. Someone will reach out to you! If they don't, then that speaks volumes on what working with them is going to be like, so scratch them off your list. What you're looking for is one person to be your main liaison throughout the process.



Step #4 - Make sure the platforms are right for you (and you're right for them)

Tell your liaisons what you're trying to accomplish with a social advertising platform and make sure it's a good fit for both of you. For example, if you need international support and that's a showstopper, then let them know that in case they don't offer that. As well, you might be too small for them, and it's good to know that up front. It's okay to ask for base level pricing at this point just to get a feel for how much they charge. Be prepared to provide details about your social ad program so the sales reps can give you the right pricing – it's rarely one price for everyone.



Step #5 – Create your Evaluation Worksheet

Your Evaluation Worksheet (see later in this section for a generic one) is a scorecard for what you believe are the most important aspects of social advertising technology platforms. As you collect information about the providers, you will score them based on how well you feel they address each point based on your expectations. You can tweak this scorecard later to better reflect how each platform scores against each other so do your best at this point and don't feel locked in to your scoring system right now. You should also take notes on this worksheet that will help you in the final decision process.

The Evaluation Worksheet is not only important to keep track of everything during this long process, but also will be used in the final step when you sell the platform into your team and key stakeholders, i.e. "As you can see, this platform scored highest in these categories".



Step #6 – Send out your Request for Proposal (RFP)

RFP's don't have to be long and should be a reflection of the key criteria you identified in your Evaluation Worksheet. Just make sure you communicate all of the very important aspects that you need for your social advertising goals. You also may need to vet out companies you're might be working with in case there are conflicts (such as the platform is owned by one of your competitors). You may also have specific requirements that you know have been concerns in the past (i.e. the strict guidelines around pharmaceutical marketing) and want to make sure the platform can address these issues before you move forward.

Give the providers ample time to answer your RFP. Be clear about how you want the RFP answered because companies labor over the wording of every sentence. If you're fine with short answers, then please let them know that.



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Step #7 – Review the RFPs and narrow down your choices to 2 or 3 max

You're going to be spending some time with these companies so you can only manage this process well with a few providers at a time. Be professional and let the providers who you aren't moving forward with know that they've been eliminated from the process. It's always advisable to keep bridges open as you never know if your needs will change or if reps will move from one company to another.



Step #8 – The Demo

The biggest mistake many marketers make when evaluating technology is to not have an agenda for the demo (see later in this section for a generic demo agenda template). Come prepared to see what you need to see in order to move to the next stage in the process. It should be a good mix of letting them take you through their standard demo (they've done this a thousand times) with you asking questions throughout. Feel free to stop the demo at any time and ask follow-up questions for clarification.

Note – Make sure the team that is going to be touching this platform every day is able to sit in on the demo. You need their input.



Step #9 – The final Evaluation Worksheet

Throughout this process, you've been scoring each company based on your expectations of social advertising technology. Now that you've vetted your final group, you can go back through and change your scoring in relation to each other. So, if a platform received a 7 (out of 10) on something and after seeing the field you know they deserve a 9, then you should make that change.

Based on your final scoring, you should have a clear winner. The hardest part is the intangibles and how much you should weight them. There's no right answer here. You will have to weight them according to your own experience and trust your process was thorough. Pricing is generally one of the biggest influencers at this step. Remember to look for value, not just price.

If you are split between two providers, it's perfectly fine to do a few more rounds of meetings and even another demo. Do not rush this decision.



Step #10 – Make your decision and sell it in to the team

Congratulations! You've made your decision. Thank the providers that you didn't pick for their time. Set a meeting with your team and key stakeholders and go through your evaluation process and scoring so they can see why you made the decision that you did.

This will also be a good time to set solid expectations on what your new partner should bring to the equation. If you chose a platform because of its incredible optimization technology, then make sure your team knows it can push hard on that aspect of the platform.

Find more resources like this one in:

[The Kenshoo Guide to Evaluating Social Advertising Technology Platforms](#)

